

**CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
CITY OF WATERTOWN
February 10, 2014
7:00 p.m.**

Mayor Jeffrey E. Graham Presiding

Present: Council Member Roxanne M. Burns
Council Member Joseph M. Butler, Jr.
Council Member Stephen A. Jennings
Council Member Teresa R. Macaluso
Mayor Graham

Also Present: Sharon Addison, City Manager

City staff present: Mike Sligar, Jim Mills, Erin Gardner, Kurt Hauk, Justin Wood

DISCUSSION

Arena Renovations – Stantec Consulting Services, Inc. Presentation - Mr. Jeri Pickett, et al

Mayor Graham welcomed the representatives from Stantec Consulting Services who were presenting a slide show presentation (on file in the City Clerk's Office).

Jeri Pickett, Project Manager reviewed the previous issues and concerns raised at last month's meeting stressing that cost was obviously a major issue in that the overall program was not meeting a budget that was satisfactory to Council. He said that they looked at ways to minimize the project in order to get the programming where it needed to be and to eliminate cost. The condition of the rink, he said was questionable since it was over 40 years old but they have verified that the refrigeration equipment is still a current refrigerant so the need to replace that is not necessary at this point. He explained that the toilet quantities were reduced to merely accommodate ice related events and not full concert events because that could be handled with additional port-a-potties. He noted that the location of the Players' Boxes is a bone of contention within the community so that needs to be determined. Finally, he mentioned the intent for the facility regarding entertainment expectations.

Regarding the prioritization matrix, Mr. Pickett explained that they raised the bar in order to eliminate everything that was rated at 3 and below as well as eliminated the Pro Shop and combined the Party Room with the Multipurpose Room. He noted that almost 8,000 square feet has been removed since the last time Council saw the concept.

Roger Kelemecz, Lead Architect reviewed the drawings of Option #4 noting that the administrative space has been divided between the 1st and 2nd floors. On the 1st floor, he pointed out that the Multipurpose Room would have a folding partition so that it could be two separate rooms or one large room. He highlighted the remaining areas on the 1st floor saying that the toilet rooms now serve 1,500 people and showed Council the team rooms as well as the dedicated Home Team area in the back corner. Regarding the Players' Boxes, he said they could be on either side of the arena.

Mr. Pickett explained that the Players' Boxes have doors on the backside so the players are not land locked. He said that Stantec's overall position on the location of the Players' Box is that it is Council's

decision, but the recommendation is to put it across the ice so that it does not interrupt the spectators' view. He knows that there are advocates for putting it on the other side but either location, he said would not affect the pricing.

Mr. Kelemecz showed Council the slide representing the 2nd floor pointing out the viewing area, administrative offices, mechanical area and the multipurpose room with a kitchen. He discussed the exterior renderings discussing options available in order to match the existing exterior.

Mayor Graham asked about the condition of the interior trusses.

Mr. Kelemecz replied that they are in good shape but would need to be cleaned and painted.

In response to Mayor Graham's inquiry, Mr. Kelemecz commented that there are two admin offices on the 1st floor, two admin offices on the 2nd floor in the front and one admin office on the 2nd floor in the back.

Mayor Graham remarked that the locker rooms that are used for the pool are in poor condition. He asked if they should have a face lift that fits in with the rest of the facility.

Erin Gardner, Parks and Recreation Superintendent said that this area definitely needs work but they are not part of this particular project. She mentioned that they would need to be put into the budget for new tile and new lockers.

Mayor Graham said that it could be put into the bid as an option.

Discussing the cost comparison, Mr. Pickett explained that the project was broken down to different tasks within the building and noted the \$600,000 line item for the new floor and \$150,000 for new dashboards. He explained that new dashboards were not discussed before but it is something to consider if the floor is going to be replaced. He recommended replacing the floor because it is currently 40 years old and the usual lifespan is 25-30 years. He said it is better to upgrade it now so it does not cause interruption to operations during two seasons. He summarized that the new cost ranges from approximately \$6.2 million on the low end to approximately \$7 million on the high end. He clarified for Council Member Butler the square footage in the various options.

Kurt Hauk, City Engineer agreed that the floor should be replaced now.

Council Member Burns said she sees the floor as a priority and that it makes sense to do it while doing a renovation like this, especially if it might need to be done in a few years. She agreed that if the floor is done then it makes sense to do the dashboards as well.

Mr. Kelemecz pointed out that the new league regulations are to have them higher at the ends of the arena.

Mr. Hauk advised that the newer dashboards are more forgiving when checking during the game.

Mr. Pickett said that some are spring loaded so they flex more.

Mayor Graham asked about the sound system and the scoreboard.

Mr. Pickett said that it is part of the FF & E line item which is calculated at 3%. Regarding acoustics, he said that he recommends an admittance ceiling that helps keep the cold in the building for the ice but it does affect the acoustics.

Council further discussed the acoustics and lighting of the arena noting that there have been complaints during concerts. Options for the windows and materials were also offered.

Mayor Graham asked for Mrs. Gardner's thoughts on the new design.

Ms. Gardner said that it fits all the groups using the arena both during the summer and winter except for larger events in which port-a-potties can be brought in. She said it incorporates a hospitality room for the concerts and shows during the summer and offers more locker room area so the trailers that are brought in are no longer needed.

Council Member Macaluso said that she is more comfortable with this number but the reality is that Council will not know the real figure until it is put out to bid. She said that she still has real concerns over the money and that this is going to be a financially difficult year for the City.

Council Member Butler mentioned several items that had been reduced in order to cut costs. He asked what the difference was between \$225 per sq ft versus \$150 per sq ft.

Mr. Kelemecz explained that the difference between the low end and the high end cost is in the type of materials used for things like exterior finish, the interior walls, toilets, facets, and vanity tops.

Council Member Butler said that use and functionality wins in his opinion over a super façade.

Mr. Hauk confirmed that the next step would be to approve a final design and then put it out to bid next fall or early winter so that it is set to go for a spring 2015 start.

In regards to cost, Mayor Graham said that no figure would be acceptable for those who think that the City cannot afford anything. He said that this range is appropriate and with all the staff and professional time spent, there is now a proposal that fits the needs so Council should move forward.

Council Member Butler mentioned that the 2nd floor could be scrapped.

Mayor Graham said he thinks that the arguments for the pros and cons of this have been made and at some point, Council needs to accept the judgment of the people that are paid to do this.

Council Member Butler said that if they agree to a 2nd floor and then the bid comes in at \$8-9 million then he will not support the bond ordinance.

Mayor Graham said that he understands and respects that.

Council Member Butler mentioned that the project could be put out to bid with the 2nd floor and without the 2nd floor. He said the project should focus more on the renovations and less on the additions.

Mr. Hauk responded that there are a number of ways they can go but what he really needs to know is what they are designing the project to. He added that at that point there are various strategies that he can employ to get a project that is under a certain number. He mentioned some bid alternatives that could be offered. In regards to the location of the team benches, he said it boils down to whether the goal is to maximize the convenience of the players or to maximize the experience for the spectators.

Council Member Burns noted that this project has been discussed for several years and the general consensus of this body is that the renovations need to be done. She thinks that delaying this to debate what needs to be done has cost the City money and that it now needs to move forward. She said that she is comfortable with what she has heard tonight and the recommendations from staff. She stated that she does not support eliminating the 2nd floor.

Council Member Jennings said he supports moving forward and not eliminating the 2nd floor. He asked if NYSERDA funds are available to help with this project.

Mr. Hauk advised that the City does not pay the system benefits charge because of the hydro agreement so it does not get the reimbursement. He mentioned that they do have a program that is project related so once the design is complete, he could submit it to them to see if anything applies.

On the revenue side, Mayor Graham stressed that there needs to be a different attitude towards what is charged for this added value.

Ms. Gardner commented that it comes down to what Council will approve but her investigations have shown that the City grossly undercharges compared to other places. She reported that if the fees for the winter activities were to increase by 50%, then there would be approximately \$60,000 in additional revenue. She will present a full report on this at a future meeting.

Council Member Butler stressed that the City needs to have a “Plan B” in case the figures come in too high after the bid goes out. He said that no one denies that the arena needs to be done but he questions how the City will pay for it.

Mayor Graham reiterated that this project needs to move ahead.

Council Member Macaluso agreed that this needs to move ahead but noted that Council Member Butler brings up some good points. She stated that there is nothing wrong with having options but she will not stop this project from going forward.

Council debated the timing of the project along with the costs but concurred to have staff move ahead towards a design plan.

Arena Modernization in the Context of the Capital Budget

A report from James Mills, City Comptroller in regards to the future budgetary impacts of proceeding with the rehabilitation of the Arena was available for Council to review. It outlined debt schedules under two allowable repayment methods – level debt service payments and level principal payments.

City Court Floor Plan - Kurt W. Hauk, City Engineer

Kurt Hauk, City Engineer reminded Council that an initial floor plan needed to be submitted to the Court System for approval. He presented drawings for this plan and wanted Council to review it prior to its submission. He mentioned that he would like Council to be comfortable with the plans first in case the State approves it right away.

Council Member Macaluso noted that whatever is sent needs to be approved by the State.

Council Member Burns said that she appreciates Mr. Hauk wanting Council's input but stated that Council's hands are tied by the Office of the Court Administration.

Mr. Hauk pointed out that the courtroom was turned in a different direction than the original plan and that the only concern is that the headroom above the Judge's bench is now eight feet. He explained that above this area is duct work for the building and if that needs to be moved then it would cost more.

Council Member Butler asked when construction would start if the plan is approved.

Mr. Hauk explained that when the design work is done the final plans will need to be approved again and then it would be put out to bid. He stressed that he does not know how long the initial review will take nor will he know how long the detailed review will take.

Council Member Macaluso asked if the City was given a time limit as to when this needed to be done when it was first announced that there would be a second full-time judge.

Mr. Hauk advised that the second full-time judge is effective April 1st but the City will not have a final product by April 1st so they are willing to work with the City on a timeline.

MPO Update

Ms. Addison informed Council that staff and herself met with the Commissioner of the Department of Transportation along with County and NYS DOT representatives. She said they discussed what was holding up the process of finalizing the MoU and the concerns with the voting structure. She explained that the voting structure provided two votes to the City, two votes to the County, two votes to the DOT and one vote to the surrounding townships which would be coordinated through DOT. She further explained that the concern was to protect against any political imbalance in the voting structure which will be addressed by having one political figure and one operational figure in place. She thought that the meeting went well and the new language will be proposed in an amended MoU.

MS4 Cooperative Update - Michael J. Sligar, Water Superintendent

Mike Sligar, Water Superintendent provided Council with an update on the Municipal Separated Storm Sewer System (MS4) stating that a draft Intermunicipal Agreement (IMA) has been drawn. He addressed the five highlights and comments on his report stressing that these are important things to consider. He emphasized that the nine members of the coalition are forming a governing board with each having one permanent member that votes. Therefore, he said the City's weight in the votes is just one. Regarding the membership, he stated that there is an initial fee of \$5,000 for this calendar year in order to get the group started with bylaws and legal advice and that the need for this seed money is what is driving the urgency in forming an IMA. He noted that the City of Watertown is unique in comparison to the other entities in regard to population density and size so the interest of the City will be quite

different than the interest of the other eight members. He summarized that there is not enough information yet to determine if it is in the best interests of the City to join the coalition.

Council Member Butler asked if the Notice of Intent had been sent.

Mr. Sligar explained that the City sent a Notice of Intent to the DEC recognizing that the City is an entity within a regulatory MS4 and a Letter of Intent to the group wanting to form this coalition saying that the City intends to participate in exploring the potential of joining such an organization. He further explained that the DEC has a grant for \$100,000 targeted for a Jefferson County MS4 to help them get started but it must be presented from the perspective of forming a coalition. He confirmed that the Town of Leray is the lead agency on behalf of the nine entities that comprise the group. He noted that the other towns have very strongly said that they are going to do this but no one has paid the \$5,000 fee. He said the question is whether the City is going to do this but he does not have sufficient answers to provide Council with prudent advice on the matter. He indicated that there are three courses of action; urge a way to get the seed money without having to enter into a IMA, enter the IMA with eyes wide open because there are many unknowns at this time or walk away from the group. He explained the advantages of being part of the group are for grant applications and sharing thoughts and ideas.

Mayor Graham said that the sharing of ideas could be done without hiring lawyers to draw up a set of bylaws.

Mr. Sligar stressed that there is nothing that needs to be decided by Council tonight and that he is just providing updated information. He said that intense discussions will start with the group beginning February 26th.

Town of Pamela's Interest in Forming a Water and Sewer District

Mayor Graham said that a response needs to be given to Attorney Renzi's letter.

Western Boulevard

Mayor Graham said Council should get more engaged in the issue of Stateway Plaza and the issue around the domain of the Western Boulevard. He said it could be discussed more at the next meeting.

Work session ended at 8:34 pm.

Ann M. Saunders
City Clerk